



By Halimah Abdullah  
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**WASHINGTON** -- During his recent series of town-hall meetings, Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Albany, said he listened carefully as veterans and their family members told stories of wading through a confusing tangle of red tape only to wait years for disability claims to be processed.

"Many of the veterans were under the impression that their claims were being delayed deliberately and waited out till they die," Bishop said. "They felt there was a tremendous amount of disrespect among staff at the VA."

Bishop put the Department of Veterans Affairs on notice that, as the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee's military construction, veterans affairs and related agencies subcommittee, he would be looking into the issue.

He also has high hopes that the Department of Defense will allow Martin Army Community Hospital, a 250-bed facility at Fort Benning, to also serve as a VA medical facility -- a move that would significantly reduce travel time for area veterans seeking care.

Many veterans are forced to travel for hours to get medical help at the nearest VA hospital, in Tuskegee, Ala. Bishop recently put in a request for a study to be done on the feasibility of expanding Martin Army's use.

